

**GWAC seeks to empower children:**

GWAC works to empower children by:

- involving them when making decisions about matters that directly affect them, as appropriate; and
- listening to them and respecting their views.

**GWAC values tolerance and diversity:**

In particular, we work to:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally.

**Staff and volunteers:**

All GWAC representatives (including but not limited to staff, church members, volunteers and contractors) must agree to abide by our Child Safety Code of Conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children.

**Training and supervision:**

In order to promote open discussion of alleged child abuse or other child safety concerns, we train our staff and volunteers to:

- identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse; and
- promote the safety of all children, particularly Aboriginal children, children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds and children with a disability.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure that they understand GWAC's commitment to child safety and to check that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate. Any behaviour that fails to comply with the Child Safety Code of Conduct will be reported within GWAC in accordance with the Grievance Policy. Where necessary, behaviour will be reported to external bodies such as Victoria Police and the Department of Health and Human Services, depending on the urgency and severity of the matter.

**Recruitment:**

GWAC takes all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children and understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

We consider all applications on their merits, including applications from Aboriginal people, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check.

We carry out reference checks and police record checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people. Police record checks are used only for the purposes of recruitment and are discarded after the recruitment process is complete. We do retain our own records (but not the actual criminal record) if an applicant's criminal history affected our decision-making process. If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

GWAC Leaders and Volunteers recruiting others for ministry teams where they would be in a position of leadership over children or vulnerable people should:

- Check with their supervising pastor before recruiting the new team member
- Conduct two reference checks (if have been at GWAC for less than 1yr)
- Ensure the person has a Working with Children Check

The new recruits must:

- Complete a police records check
- Complete the GWAC Child & Vulnerable Adult Training Course
- Sign the GWAC Code of Conduct and Diocese of Melbourne Commitment to Child Safety

### **Fair procedures for personnel:**

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decision-making processes we use when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action are thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

We record and securely store all allegations of abuse and safety concerns, including investigation updates.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised we provide updates to affected individuals and families on progress and any actions we as an organisation take, subject to respecting people's privacy in accordance with the law.

### **Privacy:**

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure that any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

### **Risk management:**

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified. In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments (for

example, any doors that can lock), and online environments (thus, for example, electronic communication with children and youth via phone, text, email or social media should be kept to a minimum).

### **Legislative responsibilities:**

GWAC takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

**Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.

Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:

- a child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)
- behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed (example behaviour is available at the Victorian Department of Human Services website)
- someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
- observing suspicious behaviour.

**Failure to protect:** People of authority in GWAC will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.

### **Allegations, concerns and complaints:**

The Anglican Diocese of Melbourne takes all complaints of misconduct very seriously. This information is intended to help you if you wish to make a complaint, have been or are being abused or harassed by any officer of the Anglican Church of Melbourne. Similarly, GWAC takes all allegations of child abuse and safety concerns seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. We work to ensure that all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

### **Reporting concerns:**

1. If a child is in immediate danger ring Victoria Police on 000

In office hours: Child Protection East Division Intake may be contacted on 1300 360 391.

After hours: Child Protection Emergency Service may be contacted from 5 pm – 9 am Monday – Friday, and 24 hours on weekends and public holidays, on 13 12 78

2. At the earliest opportunity inform the Lead Pastor (or acting LP) of the situation (0417 589 916), so that the Lead Pastor can assist in the reporting process and provide pastoral care to the reporter. If practical this should occur before reporting to Kooyoora (see below). However, point 3 should proceed without delay. Note: If the complaint or concern is in relation to the Lead Pastor refer to the GWAC Leaders' Code of Conduct & Grievance Policy.

3. Contact Kooyoora on 1800 135 246. Kooyoora Ltd has been appointed by the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne to respond to all complaints of misconduct including sexual, physical, spiritual or emotional abuse by clergy or Church officers. All information provided to this service is strictly confidential. The person taking a message on this number will ask you to give a name and your phone number or address so that the Director can contact you as soon as possible. Alternatively, you can write to:

Director of Professional Standards

Kooyoora Ltd

PO Box 329

Canterbury VIC 3126

**GWAC Child Safety Officer:**

Kathryn Bickerton - [safe.church@gwac.org.au](mailto:safe.church@gwac.org.au)